

# CABINET MEMBER UPDATE REPORT

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Regeneration and Skills)

Councillor	Portfolio	Period of Report
Marion Atkinson	Cabinet Member Regeneration and Skills	June 2022

## GROWTH & INVESTMENT PROGRAMME UPDATES

### 1. LEVELLING UP ROUND 2

- 1.1 The prospectus for Levelling Up Round 2 was issued in March 2022 by DLUHC. [Link here: [Levelling Up Fund Round 2: Prospectus - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/107444/levelling-up-fund-round-2-prospectus.pdf) This sets out the categorisation and themes for the next bidding round due for submission in July 2022.
- 1.2 LUF guidance now issued by DLUHC has been reviewed by officers to help inform potential bidding approach and strength in terms of the LUF mission statements and LUF Round 2 guidance and application form process. This is in addition to the recent Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill published in May which indicates further measures to be introduced to assist local growth and recovery.
- 1.3 Officers and members are reviewing Sefton approach to bid submission in July.

### 2. SEFTON GROWTH AND INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

- 2.1 **Bootle Strand** –The Council is driving forward plans for a repurposed Strand Shopping Centre following completion of key acquisition and site clearance work and the creation of Bootle Canalside public space.
- 2.2 **Strand Transformation** – work is ongoing to explore options for repurposing the Strand. This will look at the future development options and operational arrangements for this key town centre asset, to aid town centre recovery and regeneration. This project links to the Bootle Area Action Plan preparation and consultation which took place earlier this year and explored key issues and options for Bootle Town Centre. And responds to the seismic impacts of the post pandemic economic restructuring and earlier decisions by Govt to relocation HMRC into Liverpool (over 2000 employees lost to the town centre).
- 2.3 **Bootle Canalside** -members approved the business case for Bootle Canalside for the next phase of works at the May Cabinet and help complete this site development as a key events and activity space for the benefit of the local community. Works continue to resurface the site, new wooden planters have been brought in and planting is being undertaken at the time of writing. Further works associated with the canalbank and opening up the canal are ongoing. Link to press release - [Bootle gets a boost as Cabinet approve Bootle Canalside business case - My Sefton News Channel](#)

### 3. SOUTHPORT

### **3.1 Southport Town Deal**

Following the Southport Town Deal allocation of £37.5m the finalised business cases have been submitted for the first tranche of projects in this programme and in accordance with the Town Deal requirements. These went to Cabinet earlier this year for :

- Southport Enterprise Arcade
- Les Transformation de Southport (Public Realm enhancement)
- Building a Better Customer Experience

The Business Case for Marine Lake Events Centre will be submitted later this year as agreed with DLUCH.

Programme Management for the programme including monitoring and evaluation plan for programme delivery and output measurement for reporting to Government on the Town Deal programme is progressing.

### **3.2 The Enterprise Arcade, Southport**

In October, Cabinet approved plans to transform the Crown Buildings in Southport town centre into a high tech, collaborative and affordable workspace for small businesses, dubbed the 'Enterprise Arcade.' Forming part of the Southport Town Deal, £1.5 million has been earmarked for the project, eventually creating a purpose built hub for individuals, freelancers, enterprises, and independent professionals (and in particular the previously untapped digital, creative and technology sectors) who are taking their first steps into setting up their own business. The Business case is anticipated to be approved later this year.

### **3.3 Les Transformation de Southport** - Consultation results have been received and are being analysed to help inform future works including business and wider community feedback.

## **4. CROSBY**

### **4.1 Crosby Town Centre Regeneration**

Work continues to explore the opportunities of Levelling Up Round 2 for potential funding to support the development of a library and health hub, as a key part of the Crosby Village regeneration.

In other developments, Central Buildings site development by Plus Dane for a mixed residential and commercial scheme is now on site in Crosby Village, whilst an appeal has been lodged against the Council's refusal of the Telegraph House scheme (a new revised planning application is also anticipated imminently).

### **4.2 Crosby Lakeside**

Crosby Lakeside refurbishment continues with current contractor and refurbishment of this key coastal asset is anticipated to complete in the summer 2022. The Sefton Council hospitality company (Sefton Hospitality Operations Limited) is in place to oversee the fit out and ongoing facility hospitality management once complete. Ongoing work on lake management and cycle path improvements and highway works has also taken place this year.

## **5. AINSDALE ON SEA**

### **5.1 Ainsdale Coastal Gateway**

Green Sefton consultation and engagement on Ainsdale Beach Gateway improvements completed and outcome was reported to Cabinet Member.

On-beach and off beach concessions let for summer 2022 onwards being managed by Green Sefton and the Tourism Team. Planning approval has been given for off beach concessions. On-site toilet facilities refurbishment completed and reopened 1<sup>st</sup> April. Changing Places Unit funding agreed submitted with Ainsdale opportunity included. To be programmed for 2023 development and delivery

Marketing underway for the former Sands Public House to explore market interest in this key gateway property. Marketing process outcome to be reported in Summer 2022. Works to Toad Hall also being reviewed following storm damage earlier this year.

## **5.2 Ainsdale Neighbourhood Centre, Sandbrook Way**

Following Cabinet agreement to fund the acquisition of multiple land interests in this centre and to bring it into full Council ownership, negotiations have continued throughout the pandemic period and are ongoing. A number of properties have now been acquired and brought into Council control. A review of an agreed shortlist of options for this site is nearing completion and will inform the best approach for this site once in Council ownership, including how it can support the wider neighbourhood and community. Consultation on site development options took place in 2021 with Cabinet, the local community and Ainsdale ward councillors, which has helped inform the option appraisal shortlist being assessed.

## **EMPLOYMENT AND LEARNING UPDATES**

### **1. Funding updates**

#### **1.1 European Social Fund (ESF)**

Members will be aware from previous reports that European Social Fund (ESF) funding will expire at the end of 2023. Without replacement funding, Ways to Work in Sefton and the Positive Inclusions Project are under threat. The replacement for ESF structural funds, UK Shared Prosperity Fund, has been launched by government with funding for People and skills only coming on stream from the year 2024/25. This will cause a “funding gap” between the end of ESF and the new programme. In addition, the new allocation under the UKSPF will be much less than what has been available to the LCR under ESF structural funds. Sefton, like the other LA partners within the Ways to Work delivery partnership, has been requested to provide a breakdown of costs arising from the funding gap.

#### **1.2 DWP Restart**

Restart funding will continue for a further five years. DWP has launched a contract review process, the initial phase of this has seen the extension of eligibility criteria for Restart to include many more potential clients with different characteristics and benefit status. The current phase of re-negotiation focuses on the “right-sizing” or reduction of overall scale of the Restart contracts, based on the recent economic analysis available to DWP. This picture shows the “bounce-back “ from Covid has resulted in fewer people becoming reliant on out of work benefits, with a stronger rate of employment than expected across the country. The experience in Sefton is that referrals to Restart are continuing at a very healthy rate at present.

#### **1.3 Adult Education Budget and Cambridge Road Premises**

Slightly later than expected, the Service has now in the process of returning back to Cambridge Road site (since May 2022), with a potential formal re-opening in June. Both Career Connect and the Community Pantry continue to setup ready for the Centre’s opening and their services resuming.

Members will be aware that the original handover date for the building was expected to be March 2021. The prolonged delay has caused significant impact on the Service's ability to reach its 2021/2022 targeted outputs. The refurbishment delay has also increased the time pressures on the Service to deliver outputs against its Test and Learn Pilots. Intelligence from networking groups for AEB indicate all other providers across the area and at national level are facing similar challenges (and have not had the same challenge of operating remotely from satellite/temporary locations).

## 2 Service Performance Update

### 2.1 Sefton@work – ESF

Data Description	Range	Figures
Total Clients accessing service	Since 01/01/2016	4,646
New Clients accessing service	April 2022	65
New clients registering by age	April 2022	16-24 20 25-49 27 50+ 17 Unknown 1
W2W contracts Male	Since 01/01/16 April 2022	58% 41%
W2W contracts Female	Since 01/01/16 April 2022	42% 59%
W2W contracts Other	Since 01/01/16 April 2022	0.02% 0.0%
Positive Inclusions Male	Since 01/01/21 April 2022	67% 70%
Positive Inclusions Female	Since 01/01/21 April 2022	32% 30%
Positive Inclusions Other	Since 01/01/21 April 2022	0.9% 0.0%
ESF clients with Disabilities/Health Conditions	Since 01/01/2016 April 2022	1,476 17
Supporting Families (new project replacing former Turnaround)	All months	11
People leaving the programme (into jobs/self-emp/training)	Since 01/01/2016	W2W & PI <b>1,665</b> 200 Other programmes <b>Total 1,865</b>

### 2.2 Sefton@work - Restart

Sefton@work Advisers continue to attend JCP offices to build relations with Work Coaches, discuss any referral or engagement issues and to see those clients who have failed to attend their Initial Meeting.

Remotely accessed, digital accredited qualifications are now able to be offered as part of the Restart programme to support upskilling and the levelling up agenda. These are very short sessions including employability techniques, digital inclusion and they are proving popular.

### 2.3 Sefton Adult Learning

The following gives a snapshot of performance against the key target areas for the service for the months of April:

- No of enrolments on the system year to end of April 2022: 940 learners, 1349 learning aims.

- No of online enrolments year to end of April 2022: 944 Online Enrolments have taken place.
- No of cancelled courses year to end of April 2022: 201 courses cancelled.

As stated above, the service has worked intensively over the last period to put new opportunities in place and to bring new learning venues online. However, the possibility of catching up on performance in-year before the end of July is a risk, despite the introduction of new qualifications, extensive planning and increased promotional activities. The continued workforce sufficiency issues in terms of teaching staff, which has been repeatedly flagged up to the CA also hampers delivery. The inability to use our key premises for such a protracted period has also been a limiting factor on achieving full delivery, as outlined above.

## 2.4 NEET Reduction & Early Intervention

The latest data from Career Connect for March 2022 confirms the following (see table below):

- Sefton has the lowest % for NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) and 'NEET & NK (Not Known)' Combined across all Local LA areas and are below the England and NW Performance for all three measures (NEET, NK and Combined)
- We are performing better than the Northwest for our combined NEET & NK %
- In 2020/21, Sefton's annual average was 4.5%, a reduction of 1% from the previous year. In 2016/17, our annual average from Sefton was 8%, therefore achieving a reduction of 3.5%

Area	NEET	NK	Combined	Current Combined Rank
Sefton	2.90%	0.40%	3.30%	1
Halton	3.50%	0.30%	3.70%	2
St. Helens	3.70%	0.90%	4.50%	3
England	2.70%	1.80%	4.50%	
Wirral	3.60%	1.00%	4.60%	4
North West	3.30%	1.50%	4.80%	
Knowsley	5.00%	0.50%	5.50%	5
Liverpool	4.70%	2.90%	7.60%	6

### SPOTLIGHT on Vulnerable Groups (March 2022)

#### SEND SPOTLIGHT

	Cohort	Currently Participating In			Total	NEET	NK	NEET & NK Combined
		Mainstream Education and Training	ISPs	Supported Internships				
England	53,132	86.2%	2.3%	0.1%	88.7%	7.2%	1.4%	8.6%
North West	7,886	83.6%	2.4%	0.2%	86.2%	9.4%	1.2%	10.6%
Halton	129	84.5%	0.8%	0.8%	86.0%	11.6%	0.0%	11.6%
Knowsley	199	84.4%	0.0%	0.0%	84.4%	9.0%	0.5%	9.5%
Liverpool	460	82.0%	0.4%	0.0%	82.4%	12.6%	3.7%	16.3%
Sefton	297	87.5%	0.0%	0.3%	87.9%	9.1%	0.0%	9.1%
St Helens	160	82.5%	0.0%	0.0%	82.5%	11.3%	0.0%	11.3%

Wirral	339	82.6%	0.9%	0.0%	83.5%	13.9%	0.9%	14.7%
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### 16/17 year olds SEND

- NEET/NK in Sefton was better than the regional performance, at 9.1% it is 1.5% lower than the North West (**10.6%**) average.
- Sefton Supported Internship rate for 16-17 year olds in March 22 was **0.3%** - that is more than the England Average (0.1%) and the North West Average (0.2%)
- The proportion of SEND 16/17 in Sefton who are in mainstream education and training is **87.5%**, this is +3.9% higher than the North West average (83.6%) and +1.3% higher than England (86.2%).

### 20-24 year old SEND

- Young people SEND - age 20 to 24 NEET/NK in Sefton was significantly better than national and regional performance at **21.3%**. It is -51.3% lower than the North West (72.6%) and 55.4% lower than the England average (76.7%)
- Sefton Supported Internship for 20-24 year olds in March 22 was **7.3%** - that is +6.5% higher than the England Average (0.8%) and +6.0% higher than the North West Average (1.3%).
- The proportion of SEND 20+ in Sefton who are in mainstream education and training is **65.6%**, this is more than triple that of the England average (19.9%) and the North West average (19.7%).

### 16-24 year old (ie Full SEND Cohort)

- Young people SEND- age 16 to 24 NEET/NK in Sefton at **13.0%** which is performing significantly better than the England (42.5%) and North West (37.0%) averages
- Sefton Supported Internships for the full SEND cohort 16-24 year olds in March 22 was **2.7%** - that is +2.2% higher than England (0.5%) and +1.9% higher than the North West (0.8%) averages.
- At **79.5%**, 16-24 Sefton SEND in mainstream education and training is over 20% higher than the North West (56.2%) and over 25% higher than the England (53.1%) average.

### Care Leavers and LAC SPOTLIGHT

Academic Age	16	%	17	%	18	%	Total	%
EET	40	80%	26	73.5%	36	63%	112	72%
NEET	10	20%	13	26.5%	21	37%	44	28%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>		<b>49</b>		<b>57</b>		<b>156</b>	

### Participation in education, employment and training (EET) among Care leavers and LAC

EET has increased by 4% since January 2022 from 68% to 72%.

- 112 young people are in EET, with 5 in apprenticeships and 4 in Higher Education.
- EET destinations proportional to age group decreases at 18 years old, from 80% to 63%.
- There are currently 47 young people living outside the borough who are in EET, this 42% of the total EET cohort of 112.

#### **NEET among Care leavers and LAC**

- Young people living outside Sefton make up 38.6% of the NEET cohort and of the total cohort 36% are Inactive NEET. There has been a reduction in out of area NEET due to support from Virtual School and also a contributing factor is some young people have moved back to Sefton.. For 19+ group the Social Care PA's act as the link and for 19 plus for young people who are living outside Sefton.
- There are 64 young people living outside of Sefton area of which 73% EET and 27% NEET compared to those living inside Sefton which is 68.5% - this is the first time NEET is higher in Sefton. It is believed this is due to impact of new Education Worker in Virtual School tracking young people's movement more rapidly back to Sefton.
- Sefton Total cohort is 92 of which EET - 68.5% and NEET - 31.5%

### **3. Emerging Themes, Issues and Projects**

#### **3.1 Customer Service Excellence Award**

Sefton@work has been told its latest independent inspection for the government's CSE award has been successful, with the formal report to be published in June.

The Customer Service Excellence award is the Government's quality mark which aims to make a tangible difference to service users by encouraging organisations to focus on their individual needs and preferences. Sefton@Work has held it continuously since 2008 and they have increased their Plus points year on year, meaning the inspectors can see how they have gone above and beyond the standards expected. The CSE award is focused on 5 key areas: Customer Insight, the Culture of the Organisation, Information and Access, Delivery, and Timeliness and Quality of Service. Essentially, the CSE award is about being able to demonstrate we are putting our residents and service users at the heart of everything we do.

#### **3.2 Bootle Street Food- Community Learning Project**

Following discussion with the Bootle Town Centre Canalside project team and the Nationwide Catering Association (NCASS), we are drafting a Street Food Community Pilot project, to operate in collaboration with a College-based pathway for street food, offering opportunities for current and future students pursuing Hugh Baird College's catering & hospitality curriculum.

The Community Pilot will seek to recruit a diverse group of individuals aged 19+ from across Sefton, regardless of their previous catering training or qualifications. The Key ingredient will be a passion for engaging through food and who have a street food business concept.

The Street Food Community Learning Pilot would aim to commence its first cohort of trainees in October 2022.

#### **3.3 Cambridge Road – Hub of community Activity**

Service is linking up with Active Walk Sefton as a designated start and end point for residents taking part in walking and cycling activities. This is seen as a great opportunity to encourage learners to increase their fitness, improve their wellbeing and meet new people from all walks of life. It also links with the range of wellbeing courses to be delivered from the centre and offers full family involvement.

### **3.4 Adult Learning Workforce Issues – new approach**

The lack of suitably qualified and available tutors, in particular for Maths and STEM subjects, continue to impact the Service. Over the last 12 months the tutor team has reduced from 23 to 19. As a result, the service has reviewed its recruitment process and is using a multi-channel approach to try and improve the number and quality of applicants using new imagery and positive messaging about the merits of working with adults and changing their lives through education.

### **3.5 Supporting Ukraine**

The Adult Learning Service is actively participating in Sefton's Ukraine Refugee Action Group to identify and provide educational support for individuals through community learning, qualifications and family learning activities.

### **3.6 Sefton@work giving opportunities for young people**

Sefton@work has commenced a bespoke ILM-style paid placement for a young person who was referred to the service as a Leaving Care client. After a trial and settling -in period, the young woman has now commenced the paid placement under Positive Inclusions.

A new Kickstart trainee has also started work in this period with Sefton@work, who will be helping the service to ramp up an Employment & Learning presence on social media, with the particular emphasis on seeking new ways to engage with younger clients.

## **4. Impacts and Case Studies**

### **4.1 Restart Participant**

A is a single mother on the Restart programme who had not worked since giving birth to her daughter who told her adviser when they first met that she did not want to rely on benefits forever and was very keen to get back into paid work. Ideally, A was looking for a full-time position with a role and hours that would fit around her family responsibilities. After much discussion about the kind of work she had done previously and her skills and priorities, A decided with the help of her adviser to change direction. She decided that an entry to the social care sector would be her direction of travel. She looked for entry roles in care work with elderly people. The knowledge that many employers in this sector offer family-friendly hours was a big factor for her.

Although A was determined, she was also anxious about leaving her children to return to work and she worried about the possibility of losing out financially by going back to work. A detailed transitional In-Work Benefit calculation was the next action A would take with her adviser, and this showed A what her finances would look like and flagged any additional support she could access. It was quickly identified that with her child being 3 years old she qualified for 15 hours of free childcare. When she was finally offered a position in social care which fitted this profile, she was delighted. Through further discussion and looking at the calculation it was apparent that the initial pay on offer would be sufficient in the longer term, but there was a problem with setting up the childcare she needed. The funding gap arose because the childcare provider required parents to pay at least one month of fees in advance and additional costs for the children's lunches and snacks. Without these upfront fees, the costs would be manageable once receiving A was receiving a wage on an ongoing basis.

It became evident that this childcare funding gap was now A's main barrier to becoming employed and short of borrowing money from relatives or friends which would need to be repaid, A could find no solution.

Sefton@Work stepped in and used its Restart budget to help A fund the gap in her childcare costs until September 2022, a cost of around £1,000 over a 4-month period. This covers the period until her child enters full time education. A was also supported with travelling expenses in the form of a train pass to allow her to get to work for a transitional period of 2 months, with an option for further review if needed.

A will also receive support through ongoing, regular contact with her adviser to help sustain her new role. A clear focus will continue to be ensuring that A benefits from working both financially and in other ways in terms of her family too. When we last spoke to A she said she was *“doing really well in the new role and finding my feet in gaining a good work-life balance, although the transition has not always been easy I am starting to feel the benefits and really want to be a good role model for my daughter”*.

#### **4.2 Sefton Adult Learning – Recent Feedback from Learners**

- *“I enjoyed my course and I improved my English*
- *Fantastic, boosted my confidence. Achieved what I wanted. Fantastic tutor who gave me confidence to do it.*
- *Excellent! Very professional and friendly. Thoroughly enjoyed it.*
- *Exactly what I needed at my pace.*
- *Very enjoyable and feel able to use my newfound skills.*
- *Excellent, inspirational, and accessible. Met and exceeded all the learning outcomes.*
- *Good course which has helped me.”*

### **INVEST SEFTON UPDATE**

#### **Summary**

InvestSefton is now totally focussed on ‘business as usual activities’ although economic recovery is very much central to this as businesses now seek to trade out of the crisis and faced with re-instated VAT and increased cost of living, supply chain and energy costs across a range of sectors. As well as promoting continuing Government funded schemes at Financial support for businesses during coronavirus (COVID-19) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) the team is working with other city region support organisations such as the Enterprise Hub (start-ups), New Markets (accessing new business sales markets) and a range of other providers.

This will also help with transitioning work which is being planned as part of the wider review of the Sefton Economic Strategy for Autumn 2022. The team have begun face to face events for businesses and Business Advisers are also meeting customers on site.

InvestSefton is supporting a range of Council initiatives including its Digital strategy, development of TOMS (Themes, Outcomes & Measures) for procurement and business resilience. InvestSefton has continued to provide business support during the pandemic through its external funded programmes with enquires reaching unprecedented levels alongside website visits which have surpassed the 55,000 mark. The team has also handled 5,067 enquiries over the past 22 months.

The team is also receiving enquiries from the job centres, either people wanting to start a business, or those who are in business but not making a great deal of trade.

The ERDF Business Growth Programme has been approved for a project extension from 1 January 2022-30 June 2023 by the Department of Levelling Up Housing and Communities. The Deeds of Variation (DoV) has been approved for this project. The ERDF Place Marketing for Investment Project has also been approved and awaits its DoV

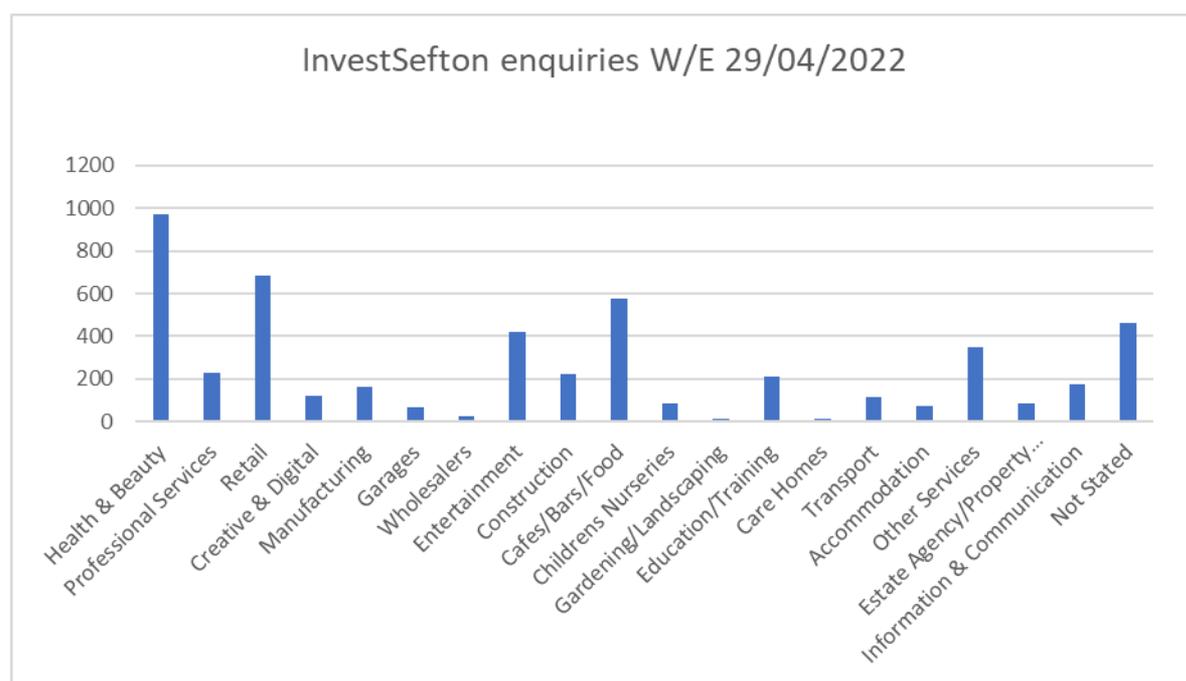
Inward Investment has also been secured most notably in Bootle through Mersey Reach and Atlantic Park while the team has supported Southport Town Deal and Southport Business Park activities. Other investment and expansion enquiries remain on going and active.

## 1 Business engagement

1.1 InvestSefton's website- has a dedicated COVID 19 landing page which is updated regularly with the latest guidance and news from Government, Growth Platform, Sefton Council and other sources of help. Since the site has gone live (Monday 30th March 2020) until Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022, the site has had 55,856 unique sessions. www.InvestSefton.com will be updated to reflect support available to businesses as economic recovery continues. The target date for its launch is week beginning 11th June 2022.

1.2 The top two pages visited were financial support and starting a business. The top five countries of origin accessing the website are as UK (76.4), China (10.9%) United States (5.8%) Ireland (1.6%) and Canada (1.2%).

1.3 InvestSefton supported Business Rates during the first month of the delivery of the Small Business Grant and the Retail, Leisure and Hospitality Grants, handling over 1,740 recorded calls with a further 400 unrecorded due to the volumes of demand. InvestSefton has handled **5,067 enquiries** from a wide range of businesses. Breakdown by type of business is provided as of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2022.



*Of these, 1,767 were in connection with business premises, starting a business, rates and business grant payments/ongoing business support through the pandemic. The remaining 3,327 are of a general business support nature including business start-up and property searches. As can be seen in the above graph most enquiries have come from businesses services such as high street retailers, including cafe's, hair/beauty salons but other sectors are also emerging as owners seek what support will be available in the event of ongoing restrictions.*

1.4 The team is reporting increased demand for pre-start-up businesses from a mix of 2age ranges, these are being referred to the LCR Enterprise Hub for further dedicated support. The Advisers are also working with businesses seeking to grow and these will be featured in future case studies.

## 2.0 Case studies

2.1 The team continues to engage with businesses via one-to-one Teams calls. Recent case studies below:

**Family owned-owned Shipping and forwarding business based in Formby** and has traded for over 40 years specialising in the chemical industry. The business provides freight forwarding services to blue chip companies transporting by air, land and sea to Europe, the Middle East and USA. They also offer export and import related documentation services to businesses using their services. The business is looking to grow but needs to improve its markets. InvestSefton supported the business by researching their presence on online directories and platforms as well as providing digital marketing training, including SEO, Professional social media platforms and website content.

**Digital marketing and publishing company based in Bootle.** The business specialises in promoting leisure facilities including pubs and restaurants and licensed premises with rooms to hire. The business has built up a large clientele across the UK with over 11,000 businesses featuring in their online guides. The business is looking to broaden their offer by incorporating more variables and information when people are searching the site including social distancing, venue hire and outdoor facilities. InvestSefton supported the business with a review of current online marketing including website and social media as well as assisting with a New Markets grant application for digital marketing.

**Bootle** based company franchise offering drain cleaning and maintenance services to both Commercial and Residential properties in the Liverpool City Region. The Business is looking at potential growth but needs additional finance. InvestSefton supported the business by reviewing grant availability to secure funding towards additional capital equipment

**Sports massage clinic based in Total Fitness in Aintree and was** established in 2020. The business has three treatment rooms and subcontracts with two other therapists who advertise under the clinics brand and social media marketing. Despite the covid related shut down the business has built up its customer base and is now looking to expand their offer for businesses and public sector agencies locally. To do this the business needs to develop its marketing strategy. InvestSefton supported the business by assisting with the drafting of a marketing flyer for local businesses as well as competitor research for website content.

### Business Visits with Councillor Marion Atkinson and Peter Dowd MP



**Print Room UK Ltd, Bootle**



**Character Mailing, Aintree**

### 3 Webinars/Events

3.1 InvestSefton's webinars and events have become a useful vehicle for engaging with businesses on a one to many basis. The team has started the planning and development of events and workshops covering a wide range of demand-led themes. The first was a face-to-face event on Digital support held on 29 March in the Park **Hotel by 11 businesses of which 6 were women.** The "Developing a Digital Roadmap for Your Business", was run in partnership with Maghull-based Search Online Marketing Ltd, and Liverpool John Moores University. The workshop included a breakout session and a Q&A, topics included:

- Developing a 'digital roadmap' for your business
- Digital marketing tools
- Market research & Competitor research
- Digital technologies to improve business operations
- Setting priorities & Measuring impact
- Business support and grants

3.2 Delegates were asked what they learnt at the event and responses included:

"the value of marketing"

"the importance of a good website"

"a very informative session

"I'm a former SEO/digital marketer but still learnt a lot! "

3.3 The team also supported the Active Sefton health and wellbeing event for employers with 11 businesses in attendance. A key area of focus has been digital skills and technology. The team has been supporting the Executive Director (People) who is the Council's lead for Digital. This includes input to a Digital Skills board and the team is currently developing governance and terms of reference.

### 4 Inward Investment

4.1 **Mersey Reach** This development has now reached practical completion. Invest Sefton continue to attend the developers marketing meetings to ensure we are up to date with new companies moving in and can offer appropriate support and to work with any Sefton based companies that are expanding. Enquiry levels are good with several of the units under offer to national trade operators. The team is working with the developer on a date for a proposed launch event and PR.

4.2 **Atlantic Park**-Further meetings have been held regarding the development options for this site, with a wider range of unit sizes being considered. This process is being supported by planning colleagues, with a detailed briefing for members to be produced shortly.

4.3 **Southport Business Park**-Ongoing work to support investment in the site. Work with interested local end users and developers is gaining momentum. No3 Southport Business Park (Former Paymentsshield House) – Building works to meet the demand for smaller units to attract occupiers has now been completed with heads of terms already agreed on several of the units. The agents for Seabank House, (former Experian building) are in detailed discussions with one interested purchaser. The team worked with Asset Management and the Landlord representatives to ease conditions within the lease to enable smaller lettings to proceed more quickly and easily, similar changes will also apply to the headlease on No.3

## TOURISM UPDATE

### 1 Destination Marketing

- 1.1 **Summer Campaign** – The main campaign for 2022 will run from now through to the end of August. It will consist of; radio (both FM and digital), digital (Google and Facebook), Outdoor (48 sheet digital sites, Rail escalator panels, passenger panels and poster sites), e-newsletter, PR activity and VisitSouthport website updates
- 1.2 **Design Agency** – Our agency (Gingerhead) has produced a 10-step campaign which runs through to December. Step 3 (June) creative is featured in digital activity, website, e-newsletter etc.
- 1.3 **PR** – Recent coverage secured in Lancashire Life, Group Travel World and online travel and leisure site B-C-ing-U
- 1.4 **Visitor Guide** – the 2022 guide distribution is well underway, with all copies anticipated to be in the hands of potential visitors by the end of July. Stock for local businesses is down to the last few hundred
- 1.5 **Southport Restaurateurs Association** – The 2022 Eating Out Guide has been printed and distributed, requests for top-ups are being actioned. A spring campaign ran through May, consisting of local radio, digital and press advertising
- 1.6 **E-newsletter** - Database stands at circa 50,000 with the addition of 2021 data and regular newsletters are sent to this audience.
- 1.7 **Travel Trade** – advertising has been placed in key travel trade publications. Editorial has been secured alongside all ads to date. We are reviewing other opportunities to communicate with this market
- 1.8 **Golf** – We are working with England's Golf Coast to manage the re-scheduling of overseas golf business. 2021 was a difficult year with travel restrictions across the world. However, on a positive note, most of the business has been rewritten into this year rather than lost. Our main issue at present is the availability of tee times on the top courses for overseas groups with Royal Birkdale having no visitor tee times available until October. We are also working with the organisers of the Cazoo Classic being held at Hillside this year.
- 1.9 **Marketing Southport** – membership currently stands at 107 (108 this time last year). We have lost several businesses (closures or COVID affecting cash flow so unable to afford membership fees). However, we have secured new members including Botanic Road Retail Group, Birkdale Boutique Apartments and Rufford old Hall has re-joined.

### 2 Conferences

- 2.1 With no major conference venue currently, it is difficult to win many medium and large-scale conferences. Proposals submitted for:
- 2.2 Regular meetings take place with the Hospitality Southport group, in general business is buoyant in the weekend hotel leisure market, however midweek and shoulder season remains a concern. All properties are struggling with recruitment. Offer and support is continuing to be provided to small accommodation operators with business reviews. . The support with other properties resulted in a Southport Guest House winning at the Liverpool Tourism Awards, there has not been a winner from Southport since 2009. Following on from that success all properties are keen to engage so that they can be more attractive to be the best they can be and attract more guests across the visitor spectrum.

## 3 Events

### 3.1 The Southport Food & Drink Festival

- The Food & Drink Festival took place over 4 days due to the Queens Jubilee extra Bank Holiday.
- Despite having to cancel the event on the Friday, due to the park being waterlogged, the event was very busy and a success.
- Feedback from the traders has been very positive
- The dates for next year are 2<sup>nd</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> June 2023

### 3.2 Southport Air Show

- The Air Show tickets sales are up on the 2019 sales at this point.
- Trader bookings are lower than 2019, this may be due to companies no longer trading since Covid-19.
- The Military Village has increased in size with the Army bringing more assets than previously
- There is a strong flying display with the Red Arrows performing both days – this hasn't happened since 2015
- The Korean Air Force Black Eagles are displaying – they are only attending 3 Air Shows and it is their first appearance in the UK since 2012.
- Site set up will commence on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> July

### 3.3 The British Musical Fireworks Championship

- 7 competitors have now been confirmed for 2022.
- Infrastructure is being secured and quotes obtained.
- Tickets are on sale

### 3.4 Operations

**3.5 Southport Market** - continues to perform strongly, A new outdoor seating area for up to 100 people is now in place and proving very popular. Visually it lets the public know we're open for business, and from a capacity point, it vastly improves our ability to increase turnover.

3.6 The new Sales and Events officer has also been very busy working on a new events plan, that will include new high-quality markets throughout the summer season.

3.7 Markets are taking place, complementing the food offer, encouraging a greater footfall into the market and surrounding area.

**3.8 Kings Gardens** - Extensive work is taking place in Kings Gardens, these works are being funded by Sefton's Kings Gardens contingency fund

3.9 Works have started with the painting of the Venetian Bridge and work on the shelters is underway, work includes shelters and benches, Landscaping, Lighting column repairs, Play Area maintenance, Tea Rooms and Arts and Craft building repairs. The work will take several months to complete.

**3.10 Southport Pier** - After going out to tender, the award to replace the pier decking has gone to Rigby's Construction, site will be set up on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July with work to start on phase one on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July. The decking will take several years to complete due to the size and cost of the project.

We are also looking at the viability of CCTV and gates on the pier, and continue to work with our colleagues in Planning and Sefton Arc to bring this to fruition.